

Correspondence.

ON THE BEST MEANS FOR OBTAINING
PERMANENT MEDICAL REFORM.

To the Editor of the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal*.

SIR,—Although the correspondents in reference to Medical Reform, in your *Journal* of April 3rd, 1850, are not unanimous as to the danger of encountering “vested interests;” yet they all agree in differing from myself in opinion, with respect to a third College; though they do not *explain why* the general practitioners should be the only one of the three professional tribes without a College.

To make mere assertions against a projected plan of reform is one thing; and to advance reasonable grounds of objections to it, is a very different thing.

Those who have attempted to *work out* the theory proposed by the “pures,” for the benefit of the general practitioners, have found that theory to be delusive, because the physicians and pures, since the proposal, have been our adversaries, in having opposed us whilst working out that theory.

The three letters in question, (*Journal*, April 3rd,) would read delightfully, if they did not appear to enunciate only the opinions of 1845. (See *Provincial Journal* of June 18, 1845, Editorial remarks at page 349, and in the following number at page 404.)

It appears that all real medical reformers wish to reach the same extent of improvement, though different parties endeavour to arrive at it by different means. It would be well if we could all agree to take the same course; but it appears to be doubtful, whether or not, your correspondents have observed the steps which have been already taken in the direction in which they are going, and the insuperable obstacles and objections which have been discovered.

Since the general practitioners have been repudiated by both the existing Colleges, it appears to me that the establishment of a new College by Act of Parliament, would be our best safeguard against further injustice.

If the general practitioners are to be educated at either of the existing Colleges, or if they are to have their licenses to practise from either, what security could we have for obtaining an efficient education, but that of having half the examiners chosen by ourselves?

By sad experience we have been taught that different parties in the same College can write *black* and *white* in reference to their licentiates. How have the Examiners at the College of Surgeons worded their diplomas for members to purchase?—and what has the Council proclaimed to the Government with respect to the inefficiency of their members as practical surgeons? In their conduct towards us, can you discover truth, honesty, or the practice of Christianity? Do you sanction that conduct? Do you recommend us, in future, to rest our faith upon them?

I, for one, am quite open to conviction, if your correspondents will point out a more practical and practicable plan for adoption than that proposed by the Council of the National Institute; but I consider

wisdom, justice, and fidelity, to be requisites in every licensing body, and shall expect to see good security for *ensuring* (so far as practicable) those essentials.

The Apothecaries' Society have well deserved the gratitude of the general practitioners, and it must be our interest as well as our pleasing duty to confide in them, and seriously to consider their suggestions.

If in the next number of your journal a new and improved plan be pointed out by your correspondents, for obtaining the object which all medical reformers consider to be desirable, they will soon find me one of the first to adopt it; but if they cannot project a better practicable course to be pursued, all they can do will be, unwittingly, to injure the cause which all parties are now espousing—to create embarrassment and delay in our undertaking, and to retard its accomplishment.

If we cannot form the amalgam which your correspondents still propose, we must take what is obtainable, and what, in the end, may prove a much better thing.

In law we have an indictment with different counts; and in physic, we must have an appeal to Parliament with different plans of reform—one count, a new College. I think we shall all do well if we jointly appeal to the Government for legislation, upon the evidence now before them, and if we all agree to abide by their decision.

I am, Sir, yours very respectfully,

WM. ALLISON.

East Retford, April 14, 1850.

P.S. After having written the foregoing letter, (for which there was not room in the *Journal*, of April 17,) I will now say in addition, that although on the one hand, it is right to pay due deference to the judgment of other parties, yet, on the other hand, we should not be blind to every *ruse de guerre*; and that I am mistaken if all those who encourage us still to cling to the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons for justice, expect that we shall succeed in obtaining it. It is not impossible that some of them may be slyly “laughing in their sleeves” at our child-like confidence in them.

Inasmuch as we cannot look up to the Colleges as Deities, all that we can expect in answer to our irksome solicitations will be contempt and contumely. We have but to read over the account of the vacillation or insincerity of the College of Surgeons on three different occasions—namely, in 1812, 1848, and 1849, (as stated in the report of the National Institute of April, 1850,) in order that we may fully understand the advantage of any connexion with that College; whilst doubtless the Councils of both Colleges have been amused, and now are disgusted with our wearisome importunities; and if we are forced upon the Colleges by the Government, our position will not be enviable.

So far, the College of Surgeons must have succeeded to their own satisfaction: first, in having delayed legislation by having kept all parties in doubt and suspense, whilst their coadjutors were encouraging us to oppose the National Association; and, secondly, in having managed to foil every attempt to raise the education of the general practitioners of this kingdom.

The voice of the Provincial Association is *not* necessarily the voice of degraded general practitioners; and

if a new College be established, there will be no lack of able examiners in both surgery and midwifery.

"Non quo, sed quomodo,"—

but the new College will expect their Examiners not only to say—

"Spectemur agendo,"

but also to show by their conduct, such principles as will command esteem and confidence.

WM. ALLISON.

April 19, 1850.

THE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE AS COMPARED WITH THE BRANCH MEETINGS OF THIS ASSOCIATION.

To the Editors of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal.

GENTLEMEN,—Having been unable to attend the meeting of the South-Eastern Branch of our Association at Brighton last week, I addressed a letter to the indefatigable Secretary, my valued friend Mr. Martin, of Reigate, which you will much oblige me by inserting in the next number of the *Journal*.

Permit me also, as a member of the Institute, to make an observation or two on that part of your last leading article which refers to its late general meeting, for though I and your readers must be well aware of the strong leaning of the Worcester Council, and therefore of the *Journal*, towards the London Colleges, notwithstanding their high crimes and misdemeanors against the profession, (especially against those in general practice,) still I do not believe that the Editors would, from any motive whatever, wish to pervert the truth. You must, however, have written from very erroneous information, when you state that the meeting of the Institute was "*very scantily attended*," and when you allude to its memorial to Sir George Grey praying for an Independent College of Medicine and Surgery, as "from so limited an assemblage as that occupying the room in Hanover Square."

I do not know what you gentlemen in provincial towns would consider a *large meeting*, but to judge from these expressions applied to the late meeting of the Institute, I suppose nothing less than two or three thousand would satisfy you. "The room in Hanover Square" happens to be one of the largest in London for public purposes, and at a rough guess will, I suppose, hold 1200 or 1500 persons; let us take the smaller number, and as the room was more than half full, including the platform, we shall be within compass if we say there were about 600 present. And when it is remembered that there were more than twenty delegates from various societies and associations in London and the country, we may have some idea of the numbers actually represented, beyond the 4000 of the National Association, of which there were many members present. Another circumstance is especially worthy of remark, that this was a meeting of gentlemen in general practice, there being, as far as I could observe, only four consulting practitioners present,

including our respected friend Dr. Hodgkin, Chairman of the Poor-law Convention; but these gentlemen took no part in the proceedings. This is very different from the conduct pursued at the Branch Meetings, where consulting practitioners seem to have attended in comparatively considerable numbers, and *taken the lead* in the proceedings.

Let us now compare this "limited" meeting of the Institute with those of the Branch Meetings of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, upon which you lay so much stress in deciding against a New Independent College. We might be led to suppose from your triumphant tone, that they were not "limited assemblages," nor "scantily attended." But what is the fact? Why, at the only two meetings where I have been able to ascertain the numbers, viz., at Bath and Brighton, where two of the *largest Branches* met, there were actually but thirty-two gentlemen present at the former place, (of which half were consulting practitioners,) and only twenty at the latter!! If the Secretaries of the other Branches will furnish the numbers at their meetings, we shall, I suspect, hear of very "limited assemblages! very scantily attended!" and I much question if all those who met at *all the Branches* would amount to one-third of those at the one meeting of the Institute. I presume the General Meeting of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association held last year at Worcester was, (from the unusual interest attaching to it,) the most numerous that ever took place; but even that, according to the *Journal*, consisted only of 133 persons. I hope, therefore, in future, you will not consider 600 gentlemen so very "limited an assemblage," seeing they form one-fourth of the *whole profession* in the metropolis.

But then you fire off my worthy friend Mr. Bottomley against the meeting as a 3000 pound shot from an enemy's battery! Now, I cannot allow all this weight to my excellent old colleague, though he doubtless possesses considerable specific gravity, far less shall I ever look upon him as an enemy. No: I know him and all his sterling good qualities much better than you seem, upon several occasions, to have done. It is true that Mr. Bottomley did state, in an unguarded moment of excitement, that he believed he represented 3000 gentlemen, but he was reminded on the spot that he had suddenly raised the number from 2,000, his former estimate. Indeed, even this estimate is taken very roughly from the supposed numbers who, three years ago, signed a petition to the College of Surgeons, but this was long before all the late evil doings of the said College, and when a hope still lingered in men's minds that it would do justice to its members. This petition emanated from a society styled the Associated Surgeons, of which Mr. Bottomley was at that time Chairman, and which consisted, I believe, of several hundred members. But that society has long ceased to exist, leaving neither council, committee, nor wreck behind, except it be Mr. Bottomley himself, for neither at the Conference, nor at the Deputation to the College of Surgeons, nor at the Institute, has he had a single member of the supposed 2,000 associated with him to